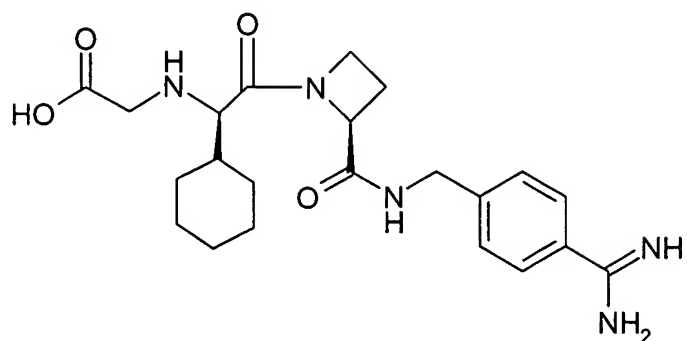
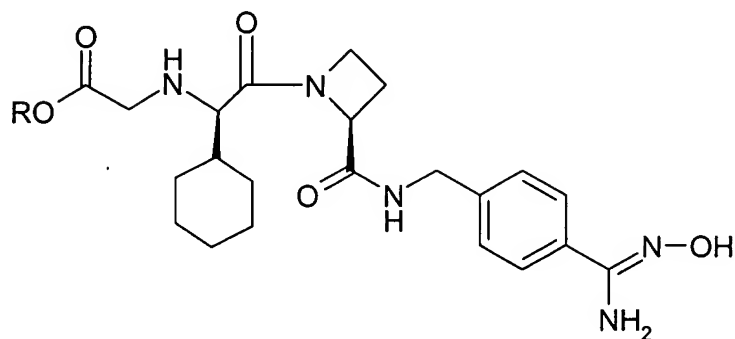


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

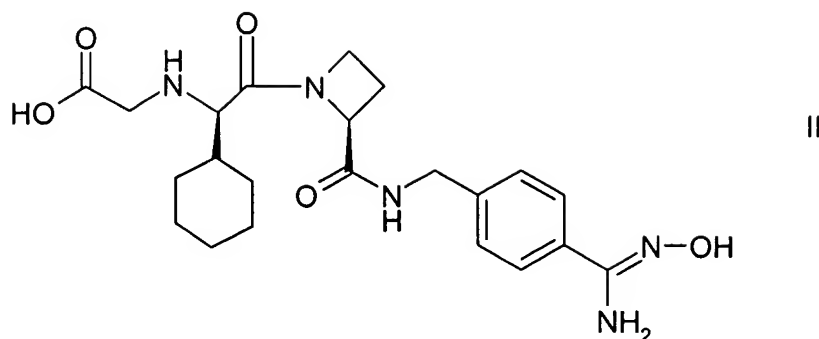
1. (Currently Amended) A process for the production of melagatran,



ex vivo, which process comprises the hydrolysis of a compound of formula I,



wherein R represents a linear or branched C₁₋₆ alkyl or a benzylic group, to form, in substantially salt-free form, an intermediate compound of formula II,



followed by reduction of ~~that~~ the intermediate compound.

2. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 1, wherein R represents a linear or branched C₁₋₄ alkyl or a benzylic group.
3. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~Claim 1~~ or Claim 2, wherein R represents methyl, ethyl, *n*-propyl, *i*-propyl or benzyl.
4. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 3 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein R represents ethyl.
5. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein the hydrolysis step is carried out in the presence of a base.
6. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 5 wherein the base is an alkali metal carbonate or an alkali metal hydroxide.
7. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 6 wherein the base is potassium carbonate, sodium carbonate, lithium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide or sodium hydroxide.
8. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 7 wherein the base is sodium hydroxide.

9. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 5 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein the hydrolysis step is carried out in the presence of a lower alkyl alcohol, a diol, an ether, ~~and/or~~ water or a combination thereof as solvent.
10. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the solvent is a mixture of a C₁₋₆ alkyl alcohol and water.
11. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the alcohol is ethanol.
12. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein the hydrolysis step is carried out at between about 15°C and about 50°C.
13. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein a preparative work up follows ~~following~~ the hydrolysis step and involves acidification of the reaction mixture.
14. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 13 wherein the acidification uses ~~acid that is added is~~ sulphuric acid, phosphoric acid, hydrobromic acid or hydrochloric acid.
15. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 13 ~~or Claim 14~~ wherein the pH is adjusted to a weakly acidic value.
16. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 15, wherein the pH value is about pH 5 ~~or thereabouts~~.
17. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of the preceding claims~~, wherein the reduction step is carried out by ~~way of~~ hydrogenation in the presence of a suitable catalyst system.
18. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 17, wherein the catalyst is a precious metal.

19. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the metal is platinum, ruthenium or palladium.
20. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 19, wherein the metal is palladium.
21. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 18 ~~to 20~~ wherein the metal is provided on a support.
22. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 21 wherein the support is powdered charcoal.
23. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 17 ~~to 22~~, wherein the hydrogenation is carried out in the presence of a solvent system comprising a lower alkyl alcohol, water or a mixture thereof.
24. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 23 wherein the alcohol is a C₁₋₆ alkyl alcohol.
25. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 24, wherein the alcohol is *i*-propanol, methanol or ethanol.
26. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of Claims 23 to~~ Claim 25 wherein the solvent system is a mixture of methanol and water or ethanol and water.
27. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in Claim 26 wherein the solvent system is a mixture of methanol and water in proportions of about 70:30 (v/v) ~~or thereabouts~~, or a mixture of ethanol and water in proportions of about 62.5:37.5 (v/v) ~~or thereabouts~~.
28. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 17 ~~to 27~~ wherein the hydrogenation is carried out at elevated temperature.
29. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 28, wherein the hydrogenation is carried out under a positive pressure of hydrogen.

30. (Original) A process as claimed in Claim 29, wherein the hydrogenation is carried out under at least 4 bar of hydrogen pressure.

31. (Currently Amended) A process as claimed in ~~any one of Claims~~ Claim 17 ~~to 30~~ wherein the hydrogenation is carried out in the absence of an inorganic acid, or an additional carboxylic acid, as part of the reaction mixture.